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# SERVICE

## USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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### ALL ABOUT FOOD

Consumers Never Had It So Good. That's what Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman said at a recent news conference. "But it won't continue 'that good' for consumers," the Secretary warned, "if the current decline in farm prices continues." If farm income doesn't improve, he predicts the Nation's family farm system will disappear--to be replaced by monolithic corporate farming operations that "could conceivably control food supply so they get any price they want." He asks consumers to pay a little more for their food now to avoid paying a lot more later.

Pick the Plentifuls. Here's a tip for June brides anxious to impress their new husbands with their shopping skills. Before you shop for food, check the U.S. Department of Agriculture's List of Plentiful Foods. It will tell you which foods are in good supply--and most likely good buys at your retail store. In June, the list includes eggs, orange juice, beef, potatoes, dry beans, milk and dairy products.

Quality Check. In the summertime, when fruits and vegetables are in season, you'll often find frozen fruits and vegetables offered at bargain prices. Before you buy, be sure they are truly bargains. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture it's a good idea to buy one package and check its quality before buying in quantity. Use this checklist:

- (1) Note whether frost has formed inside the package. Large amounts of frost may indicate quality has been impaired.
- (2) Note the color of the food. Is it normal and bright? Some color changes betray food that has been held too long and at too high temperatures. Avoid peach slices and red cherries that have turned brown; berries that have lost their brightness; snap beans turned olive green; green peas that become grayed green then yellowish.
- (3) Look for undersirable changes in texture.
- (4) Check the flavor.

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CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS



## WHAT'S NEW

Fruit Snacks. Small, crunchy pieces of dried apple, peach, pineapple--you may soon be eating them by the handful. Now under development at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, these snack items are produced by osmotic drying, a process which gives the fruit more intense natural color and flavor than conventional air-drying. The new process also should make it possible to dry fruits previously considered "undryable"--melons, papaya, and guava.

Korean Cornucopia. A magic lily, a yellow weigela, an exotic spice bush and a pine with edible seeds--these are among the latest plants brought from Korea by U.S. Department of Agriculture plant explorers. The lily blooms at an unlikely time--after all its foliage has died. The new weigela ignores the fact that weigelas bear only pink, red or white flowers. It produces yellow blossoms. The spice bush sports gay red fruit and has unusually attractive foliage. And the five-needle pine has tasty nut-like seeds. Because the climate of Korea is similar to that of the Eastern United States, these plants should make good plantings in American gardens. More than 500 plant collections were brought back from the four-month exploration. None, however, is ready for the consumer market. It will take a while to test them in the United States and to develop breeding stock.

Girth Control. Use of synthetic sweeteners in soft drinks are riding high on the crest of Americans desire for low-calorie beverages. And there's no let-up in sight, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Use of noncalorie sweeteners in soft drinks is expected to double between 1965 and 1970. On the other hand, there has been little change in per-person use of refined sugar. Although in another 3 years, total usage of synthetics may reach a sweetness equivalent of about 915,000 tons of refined sugar, only a fraction of these will be used as substitutes for sugar.

New Pink Grapefruit Drink. There's a new punch drink on the way from USDA to you. It's a grapefruit drink that's designed to meet everyone's taste. It's sweet to suit the youngsters, yet has a moderate to high acidity to suit the sophisticated palate of adults. And it's pink because people like pink drinks. The new frozen concentrate, now available for commercial production, combines grapefruit juice, strawberry puree, lemon concentrate and sugar.

The Tray-Pack Lunch. Over 400 District of Columbia school children have tossed away their lunch bags and are now eating hot meals packed in their own disposable plates. The hot lunches come from another school, are packed in heat-proof containers some two hours earlier, then transported to the school without a kitchen. All carry-out meals are similar to those served in a regular School Lunch cafeteria. For example, one day's meal may include country fried steak, buttered spinach and hash brown potatoes on the tray, plus bread and butter, cookies and milk served at the school. The covered trays which make this possible are compartmented like those used for frozen dinners. Although still being used "experimentally" by lunch officials, the trays already have the unqualified approval of the youngsters.



## YARD AND GARDEN

Color It Green with Trees. "Color It Green with Trees" has proved so popular, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is making it available for use in all media. The latest is a visual presentation--fifty colored slides--excellent for use by garden clubs, civic organizations, TV stations, anyone interested in showing others how to beautify their homes, their communities. The slides explain how trees not only enhance the beauty of an area but aid in conservation. They take the viewer through the selection, planting and growing of a tree. The slide set costs \$5.50 and may be ordered from the Photography Division, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Filmstrips may be purchased from Photo Lab, Inc., 3825 Georgia Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011, for \$5. A narrative guide accompanies each.

What'll You Have? What is your pleasure--pink or blue hydrangeas? You can make them whichever color you want, say plant specialist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For blue hydrangeas, water the plant two or three times with a solution of 1 pound of aluminum sulfate in 5 gallons of water. Drench the soil thoroughly, fertilize lightly. If you want pink flowers, use a high phosphate fertilizer, such as 15-30-15, in the water.

Unfruitful Fruit Trees. Do your apple trees bloom profusely each year--then fail to bear fruit? It's probably because they aren't pollinated. With the exception of Golden Delicious, most apple trees will not set fruit with their own pollen. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says it's generally best to plant at least two varieties. This is true particularly of Winesaps, Staymans, Gravensteins, Baldwins, and Rhode Island Greenings.

Led by the Nose. You may think there's a big difference in the odor of paint and the smell of strawberries. But not sap beetles. During a recent outbreak of these beetles in Michigan (they ruined a \$3 million strawberry crop), sap beetles found auto paint--the kind that's used as a primer on rust spots--just as attractive as the strawberries. This led scientists to but one conclusion--why not use the paint as a lure to trap the insects? U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists, together with those at Michigan State University, are now investigating this possibility. And if it works on sap beetles, why not other insects, too?

## HOUSING

Aid for the Aged. More than 2,000 rural people 62 years of age or older are now living in apartments, duplex units or detached homes built with funds obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The program that has made this possible, the senior citizen rental housing program, began in late 1962. To date, it has extended credit to 163 individuals and corporations in 34 States and Puerto Rico to finance 1,263 senior citizen housing units. Average rent to the oldsters: \$65 a month. This USDA rental housing credit program also permits 50-year loans with 3 percent interest to private, non-profit corporations or cooperatives for providing rental and cooperative housing and related facilities to low-income rural people.

## RESEARCH REPORT

Calcium and Kidney Stones. "Good" calcium helps form bones and teeth. "Bad" calcium forms kidney stones. But what makes which? U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists who have been studying the components of milk (the major source of calcium for many people) find that substituting cornstarch for milk sugar or substituting corn oil for butter oil drastically reduces kidney stones in rats. A year of experimenting with diets shows that 47 percent of the rats fed skim milk plus butter oil had kidney stones; about 29 percent fed milk sugar and butter oil had stones. But less than 5 percent of those on milk sugar and corn oil had stones, and none on cornstarch had them.

## SUCCESS STORY

Savings in Store. The folks living along Gilbert Creek, W. Va., no longer owe their souls to the company store. They've got their own grocery store, a cooperative venture that operates on a scant 10 percent mark-up. And they did it themselves--without a cent of federal funds--only the know-how help of the local community action group. To get working capital, 543 shares were sold at \$10 each. A small cinder-block building was renovated by willing volunteers. (Most of the men in this once-prosperous mining community are unemployed.) In December, the doors of the community-owned store opened. That month, sales totaled \$2,700. By March, they had risen to \$8,000. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has now authorized the store to handle food stamps, and two people work full-time and one part-time. "Nobody's getting rich from the store," says Charles W. Cline, elementary school principal and president of the new corporation, "but the people aren't being taken either."

## COOKING AND CANNING

Floating Fruit. Ever wonder why strawberries and other fruit sometimes float in a jar of jam? Food specialist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture offer these possibilities. The fruit may not have been fully ripe. It may not have been thoroughly crushed or ground. Or cooked enough. Or perhaps you poured the jam into containers too soon after it was taken from the heat.

Over the Coals. Take to the camp stove and charcoal grill. Beef is plentiful this month, and there's nothing better to eat on a picnic than broiled steaks and hamburgers. For best results when cooking out-of-doors, follow these tips from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Choose thick steaks and plump hamburgers. Adjust grill so meat is about 6 to 8 inches from the coals. Tilt it a little so the fat runs down the grids to one side--away from the coals so there's no smoke or flames. To check doneness, cut a slit in the meat near the bone or in the center and look at the interior color. Allow longer cooking time on a breezy day.

Delicious Apples. Quick now. Name your favorite apple. Bet your answer is Delicious. Far more Red and Golden Delicious apples are produced and eaten each year than any other apple, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports. Delicious apples filled 48 million bushels in 1966. McIntoshes came in second--but with only 17 million bushels. Washington is the leading apple-producing State; then New York, Michigan, California and Pennsylvania in that order.

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